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Procedia - Social and Behavioral Sciences 136 (2014) 527 – 531

**Procedia**  
Social and Behavioral Sciences

LINELT 2013

## Views Of University Academic Members And Students On The Absenteeism

A.Salih ŞİMŞEK <sup>a</sup>, H.Gonca USTA <sup>a</sup>, Canan KOÇ <sup>a</sup>, C.Teyyar UĞURLU <sup>a</sup><sup>a</sup>*Faculty of Education, Sivas Cumhuriyet University, Sivas 58140, Turkey*

### Abstract

School attendance and absenteeism of students is an important prior for students to live their behavioral change process expressively. However, there is a positively moderate level relation between school attendance and school success (Krenitsky-Korn, 2011). For university students, absenteeism may change according to their social status, independent behavior and attitudes, and their ages. This study aimed to gather views of lecturers and students about students' absenteeism attitudes. In research, the pattern of phenomenology is used. In choosing the research group, maximum variety sampling is used. In this sense, nearly 180 students and 50 lecturers are determined as samples. Data examined by content analysis method.

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Selection and peer-review under responsibility of the Organizing Committee of LINELT 2013.

**Keywords:** Self-regulation, self regulated learning, prospective teacher

### 1. Introduction

Education institutions assume socialization function by creating desired behavioral changes in human behaviors. Providing many features affecting life of an individual is seen as a function of education. Efficient and qualified realization of the functions by the education institutions is determined by many different variables. The most important factors of the school as education institute are student, teacher and education program. The properties of these factors and interaction among the factors create the education process. Absenteeism is an important variable affecting education process.

Attitudes and behaviors of the students whose needs are met via education institutions become positive. Attendance and absenteeism states of the students are important predecessor for living behavioral change process significantly (Uğurlu et al., 2012). There are different definitions about the school absenteeism. The reason is

Corresponding Author: A. Salih Şimşek  
E-mail: [asalihsimsek@gmail.com](mailto:asalihsimsek@gmail.com)

different absence behaviors such as long term or sometimes truancy. School absenteeism is defined as getting away from lessons independently from a legally unforeseen reason or whether parents have information (Stamm, Ruckdäschel and Templer, 2009). According to Kearney and Silverman (1990), absenteeism is defined as not going to school or not following lessons regularly, falling behind in the class all day (Akt. Özkanal and Arıkan, 2011). Not attending to the school or lessons can affect students' own successes, attitudes and behaviors of the teachers to the lessons, attitudes and behaviors of other students.

Since absenteeism affects the qualification of the education environment, it is accepted as an important problem. The subjects of why students are absent from school, what can be done for decreasing absenteeism, the importance of attendance/absenteeism controls are important in terms of questioning absence behaviors. Absenteeism can change depending on different reasons. According to Kearney (2008), absenteeism reasons can be collected under following titles: using alcohol and cigarette, medical problems, psychological problems, violence at school, environmental problems, homelessness, poverty, young pregnancy, school climate, divorced families, and unreliable neighbor relations (Akt. Austin and Totaro, 2011). Kadi (2000) dealt with absenteeism in terms of school, family, personal problems, friend environment and gender. Altinkurt (2008) shaped dimensions of absenteeism reasons as reasons arising from managers, reasons arising from teachers, reasons arising from family, reasons arising from environment, reasons arising from academic anxiety, and individual reasons. Examining researches on the development of absenteeism depending on different reasons in the literature, the relation between green schools and absenteeism (Issa et al, 2011), obesity and absenteeism (Baxter et al., 2011; Rappaport, Daskalakis and Andrel, 2011), internet and absenteeism (Austin and Totaro, 2011), alcohol and absenteeism (Austin, 2012) were detected. Low level relations between absenteeism and school success were seen in the relations between academic success and school absenteeism as well (Scarpa, 1978). Cook and More (1993) list many factors affecting school attendance as drunkenness, reasons depending on accident and fight, pregnancy, diseases related to unsafe sex, conflicts with parents (Austin, 2012).

According to Orr (1996) (via Lounsbury et al., 2003), absenteeism is a major problem of schools and become bigger in time. In fact, 6% of students are absent in a college in a day. The result of the situation is leaving the school. The reasons of absenteeism reveal differences especially as culturally in different researches. These results can be understood from aforementioned research results (Austin and Totaro, 2011; Baxter et al., 2011; Rappaport, Daskalakis and Andrel, 2011; Austin, 2012; Uğurlu et al., 2012). The reasons emerged by absenteeism affect especially academic success negatively (Baxter, Royer, Hardin, Guinn, Devlin, 2011; Özkanal and Arıkan, 2011). Basically, the purpose of researching absence behaviors is to questioning reasons under the attitudes and behaviors of the students to the school, lessons and friends and revealing the reasons under the attention or indifference of the students to the school and lessons.

In fact, the reasons and suggestions related to the absenteeism can raise awareness on the precautions to be taken by education systems (Pritchard& Williams, 2001). This study analyzed views of university students and academic members about the “absenteeism” phenomenon. Since the university students, who are accepted as adult, have major and appellor identities, they can determine school attendance behaviors by free will. Firstly, detection of how students and academic members deal with absenteeism phenomenon is seen important in the formation of suggestions and practices necessary for reducing absenteeism behaviors of the university students expected to behave more consciously.

Therefore, the study will ensure questioning of attitudes and behaviors based on students' views on absenteeism for academicians in practice. Thus, a reply to the question of “what does absenteeism mean” to students and academicians was sought.

## **2. Method**

### *2.1. Research Design*

This research is a qualitative study for determining absenteeism perception of students receiving education in relative departments of Cumhuriyet University. Phenomenology pattern was used in the study. Focusing on phenomenon, which we aware but do not have a deep and detailed understanding, is aimed by the phenomenology pattern (Yıldırım ve Şimşek, 2005).

## 2.2. Participant

Maximum variation sampling of purposive sampling technique was used in the study. This method allows studying the situations deeply (Yıldırım ve Şimşek, 2005; Cohen, Monion ve Morison, 2005; Silverman, 2006). Therefore, students and academicians in 13 faculties of Cumhuriyet University were reached. While determining a group of students and academic members to be interviewed within the qualitative research, maximum variation method was used. According to this method, faculties, the number of students and academic members of the faculties are given at the following table. 180 students of the total 21695 students in thirteen faculties, approximately 0,8 of the total students, were determined as participants. 20 students from the faculties having more than 3000 students, 15 students from the faculties having 3000-1000 students, 15 students from the faculties having 3000-1000 students, at least 10 students from the faculties having less than 1000 students were determined for interview in the distribution of 180 students according to the faculties. 52 academic members of the total 610 academic members in the faculties, approximately 0,8 of the total academic members, were determined as participants. The number of students and academic members depending on the criteria were given at the following table.

## 2.3. Data Collections and Analysis

Data were collected by using semi-structured interview form in the research. The questions in the interview form were prepared by depending on views of students and academicians and examinations of articles regarding absence practices within Cumhuriyet University, Associate and Undergraduate Education Training Examination Regulations.

Expert opinion was taken for the validity and reliability of the questions. While voice recording device was used for some of the interviews, responses were written by note-taking in some interviews.

Then, coding results were compared. Both of the researchers were seen to make coding similarly. At the last phase, raw data and analyzed data were controlled by the other two researchers (Bilgin, 2006; Yıldırım ve Şimşek, 2005;).

Descriptive analysis and content analysis methods were used in the analysis of data. During the content analysis process, coding was firstly made through transcribed voice records and collected interview forms, then categories and themes were created. Frequencies in the created categories were calculated and the findings were interpreted. During descriptive analysis process, direct quotations were used to support findings.

## 3. Findings

In this section, the responses of academicians and students to the questions in the interview form about “meaning and importance of absenteeism phenomenon” were presented in accordance with the research purpose.

### 3.1. Views About Absenteeism Phenomenon

In the meaning theme of academicians’ absenteeism phenomenon, absenteeism was defined as “right” (f=6) 11,54% and “reason of failure” (f=5) 9,62% with the highest frequencies. The most emphasized situation at the third rank was referred as “should not be done unless necessary” by 7,69% (f=4).

Table 1. Views of Academicians and Students on the Meaning of Absenteeism Phenomenon

Themes and Categories	Lesson Supervisor		Student	
	f	%	f	%
Legal Right	6	11,54	27	18,62
Should be repealed	3	5,77	44	30,34
Student’s preference	1	1,92	48	33,10
<b>Meaning</b> Obligation	3	5,77	29	20,00
Should not be done unless necessary	4	7,69	3	2,07
Reason of failure	5	9,62	-	-
Unconscious	1	1,92	-	-

Discipline	1	1,92	-	-
Compulsory Attendance is senseless	-	-	15	10,34
Reason of stress	-	-	7	4,83

Some academic members expressed their views on the absenteeism phenomenon as follows:

Absenteeism is a right vested by regulation to the students. (A28)

Absenteeism is an official compensation process relieving students when they are stuck in a difficult situation. (A37)

In the meaning theme of students' absenteeism phenomenon, the expressions with the highest frequencies are ranked as follows. The expression of "student's preference" (f=48) 33.10%, "should be repealed" (f=44) 30,34%, "obligation" (f=29) 20,00% is the mostly expressed judgment. A student stated that I think absenteeism is necessary for some lessons. Because, our friends coming for listening to the teacher listen to the teacher. But there are also some friends attending the class just for the compulsory attendance. Thus; there should not be compulsory attendance. (Ö102)

Table 2. The Views of Academicians and Students on the Importance of Absenteeism Phenomenon

Themes and Categories	Lesson Supervisor		Student	
	f	%	f	%
Change according to circumstances.	-	-	38	26,21
<b>Importance</b> Class attendance is important.	23	44.23	113	77,93
Class attendance is not important.	1	1,92	43	29,66

Examining the views of the academicians on the absenteeism phenomenon according to the importance theme, it is seen that 44,23 % of the academicians (f=23) emphasized the importance of the absenteeism in their views on the absenteeism phenomenon.

In the importance of absenteeism theme, A5 made following explanations on the subject: Face to face relations are important in the psychology, teachers' sharing experiences [by means of it face to face relations happen] students cannot find them in books.

Examining the views of students on the absenteeism phenomenon according to importance theme; it is seen that 77,93% of the students (f=113) emphasized the importance of absenteeism in their views of absenteeism phenomenon, 29,66% of the students (f=43) do not see attendance as important.

According to the explanation of the Ö27 "Attending to the class is important for me. Because, I do not understand difficult lessons when I do not attend class in the faculty", he emphasized importance of the attendance. Ö57 said "Listening to teacher enable me to understand the subject better."

#### 4. Conclusion and Suggestions

As a result of this research, the absenteeism phenomenon was dealt by the academician's and student's point of view and defined according to the meaning and importance themes. The academicians see absenteeism phenomenon mostly as a right and reason of failure in terms of meaning. Students referred absenteeism phenomenon as student's preference and should be repealed.

Also, according to the results on the importance of absenteeism phenomenon, while academicians stated 44.23% absenteeism was important, students emphasized 77.93% absenteeism importance. The studies on the relation between absenteeism and success (Scarpa, 1978; Baxter, Royer, Hardin, Guinn, Devlin, 2011; Özkanal ve Arıkan, 2011) show the importance of the absenteeism phenomenon. Examining absenteeism phenomenon in different aspects can be beneficial for preventing indifference to the school and lessons, trouble making reasons.

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